

WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 2, 2005

Handout(s) distributed tonight:

1. *Town of Belmont Comparative Operating Statements for the Six Months Ending 12/04*
2. *1/26/05 Governor's Budget and FY06 Local Aid Estimates Email from 1/28/05*
3. *Photo of the Waverley Fire Station*
4. *Waverley Square Fire Re-Use Steering Committee Recommendations*
5. *30 Year Calculator for Tax Levy Bill Impact of Project Bond Debt Exclusions, Operating Overrides, and New Growth*
6. *3rd Draft of the Reserve Policy*

Members absent: Hofmann, Paolillo, and Curtis

Also present: Acting Town Administrator Rebecca Vose, Selectman Will Brownsberger, Selectman Angelo Firenze, School Director of Finance & Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, School Superintendent Dr. Peter Holland, Town Planner Timothy Higgins, Waverley Fire Station Re-Use Steering Committee Member Roger Colton, and Town Accountant Barbara Hagg

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:37 PM.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed the minutes of the January 19, 2005 meeting.

- *Selectman Solomon made a motion, Vice Chair Jones seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of the January 19, 2005 meeting.*

Special Town Meeting Article 2 – Water Retained Earnings

Town Accountant Hagg reviewed this history of this article with the Warrant Committee.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and it was voted unanimously to recommend Article 2 to the Special Town Meeting.*

Special Town Meeting Article 6 – Wellington School

Chairman Widmer mentioned this was previously approved by the Warrant Committee at the last Town Meeting before it was withdrawn. Member Bruschi is supporting this Article, but she is sorry the money is coming from the Capital Endowment Fund as a funding source. She also asked the Board of Selectmen if this Article could go before the Waverley Fire Station Article. Selectman Solomon agreed.

- *Selectman Solomon made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and it was voted unanimously to recommend Article 6 to the Special Town Meeting.*

Special Town Meeting - Waverley Fire Station Articles

Mr. Colton reviewed the Steering Committee's process, recommendations, and the three articles that will implement those recommendations. The Cecil Group provided technical assistance, and using that information, the Committee applied the criteria to eventually develop the five recommendations. The Board of Selectmen adopted the Steering Committee's recommendations in August.

Waverley Square Fire Station Re-Use Steering Committee's Key Recommendations:

1. Fire Station be redeveloped as a condominium complex
2. Town should adopt a zoning bylaw to be rezoned as a multi-family residential development
3. Town should dispose of the Fire Station and the façade of the building be preserved according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards
4. Town should dispose of the Fire Station subject to the design guidelines
5. Town should retain the option of refusing all bids for the Fire Station

There are three Articles before Town Meeting. Articles: (3) transferring the property to the Board of Selectmen, (4) move the Fire Station along with two smaller properties into the LB-1 Zone in order to allow the multi-family housing by right, and (5) create an exception to the existing public building conversion bylaw.

Member Heigham spoke as a member of the Planning Board. They were operating under the assumption the historic integrity of the building not be disturbed. There was a statutory public hearing (twice) in which there were no objections. This is something the Planning Board and the Re-Use Committee put a lot of time into, and it is not fair to change it. Selectman Solomon noted the Board of Selectmen has not formally voted on these articles yet.

Member Brusch hears Member Heigham's point that the zoning is not under the Warrant Committee's jurisdiction. This came to the Capital Budget about two years ago. At that time, the historic preservation piece conveyed the property to the Board of Selectmen. The Capital Budget Committee had, at that time, a difficult time with this part because it ties the hands of the person purchasing the building. The Capital Budget Committee does not support Article 5 as written, but does with the amendment, filed last Monday.

Vice Chair Jones asked Mr. Colton for a clarification on Recommendations 3 and 4. Mr. Colton discussed some of the process the Steering Committee went through. Recommendation 5 suggests that the bids could possibly be refused with no specific reason.

Selectman Solomon thinks there are many developers who are used to dealing with buildings with historic guideline restrictions. The absence of ambiguity is a positive.

As a resident of the Waverley Square area, Member Doblin could not support a recommendation without a historic restriction included. The Board of Selectmen was wise to reiterate this position and to have it in the first place. The whole area (both commercial and residential) will benefit from the historic preservation of this building.

Member Fitzgerald recognizes we are asking residents to tighten their belts on many issues, and he supports Recommendation 5 to allow the Board of Selectmen to refuse all bids. This sends out a more positive message to the residents than having so many restrictions.

Member Brusch thinks we are spending a lot of time discussing the Recommendations but that is not something on the floor on Monday night. Selectman Solomon agreed that some of the Recommendations would be in the RFP, not in the Article. Member Heigham added that Article 3 could be modified to include these Recommendations.

Mr. Colton clarified that Article 3 conveys the property to the Board of Selectmen to dispose of. Recommendations 2 and 3 would be included in the zoning articles. He further clarified that Recommendations 1, 4, and 5 would be implemented in the RFP.

Member Stratford asked if this passes, would there be a discussion with the Board of Selectmen for the people to weigh in on these issues.

Chairman Widmer clarified that this Committee's vote on Article 3 is for the transfer of property to the Board of Selectmen under the zoning conditions and the explicit commitments (essentially it will be residentially only) by the Board of Selectmen on the Steering Committee's Recommendations.

Selectman Firenze is concerned with the order of the Articles in case one or two pass and one or two do not. Selectman Solomon agreed, and the order will be Articles 1, 2, 6, 5, 4, and 3.

Member Stratford suggested we vote on the Article tonight as written and reserve the right to caucus during Special Town Meeting between the Articles when they are voted.

- 13 members present: Member Heigham made a motion, Member Callanan seconded said motion, and Members Widmer, Solomon, Callanan, Jones, Stratford, Fitzgerald, Oates, Hobbs, Heigham, and Doblin voted to **recommend Article 3 subject to the condition that if there are changes to articles 4 & 5, the Warrant Committee would caucus** to the Special Town Meeting.
- Members White, Tillotson, and Brusch voted to **not recommend Article 3** to the Special Town Meeting.
- Members Curtis, Hofmann, and Paolillo were **absent** from this meeting.

FY06 Budget Discussion

Next week, Chairman Widmer would like to have an open discussion on where the Warrant Committee is on the FY06 Budget. On the 16th, he would like each

subcommittee to report on two things (bullet form): (1) the FY06 Budget issues, including recommendations, and (2) the long-term issues. It is the role of the subcommittees to do this. It is utterly imperative that the subcommittees meet with the department heads before doing that. This is not happening in a complete way yet, and it has to. Our discussion on the 16th follows the Saturday morning meetings. Chairman Widmer would like a compiled list on the FY06 issues and longer-term issues because of this discussion. The discussion on the 9th will be preliminary, including the question on the override.

The Governor's budget came out (*Handout 2*) recently. It is essentially level funded. The additional money for Belmont is \$37K, so our level funded assumption is sound. There is no additional discretionary money available for the next few years.

Chairman Widmer mentioned there will be a FY06 Budget night put on by the Warrant Committee in March. The thought for Town Meeting is to put on the table some of the work that has been done in looking longer term. We have to come up with some scenarios to present to Town Meeting so one can see long-term impacts. The Board of Selectmen, Treasurer, School Committee Chair, Capital Budget Committee members, Town Accountant Hagg, and Joe Barrell have been meeting over the past few weeks about a Reserve Policy for the Town (to be discussed next week) and to look at the impact of meeting our identified capital needs with periodic overrides to sustain the level of services on the operating side. Putting all this together, what is the impact on the taxpayer? Chairman Widmer asked Selectman Brownsberger to present what this Subgroup has done and where we are in terms of guiding our discussions longer-term and how we should present this to Town Meeting.

Selectman Brownsberger mentioned three levels of policies: debt policy – what is the appropriate level of debt a town should issue, reserve policy – how much should the town hold in reserve and what it should consider to have on reserve, and the growth rate of our tax bills to the extent we can forecast and plan for that.

Selectman Brownsberger thoroughly reviewed the spreadsheets (*Handout 5 – this will be emailed to the Warrant Committee*) with the Warrant Committee discussing the different assumptions and model scenarios. The Committee discussed how many scenarios from this presentation could be given to Town Meeting.

Other

Member Oates mentioned the bids for the Fire Stations have come in \$1.1 million over budget, with the two lowest bidders only \$8K apart. The Fire Station Building Committee will be meeting 2/9. There will be more information after the Building Committee's next meeting.

The Warrant Committee will not be meeting prior to Special Town Meeting on 2/7/05.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina Frizzell, Recording Clerk